

## **Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 46**

### **RESOLUTION CHAPTER 78**

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 46—Relative to the Ruben Salazar Memorial Highway.

[Filed with Secretary of State July 12, 2005.]

#### **LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

SCR 46, Romero. Ruben Salazar Memorial Highway.

This measure would designate a portion of State Highway Route 710 in the County of Los Angeles as the Ruben Salazar Memorial Highway. The measure would request the Department of Transportation to determine the cost for appropriate signs showing this designation and, upon receiving donations from nonstate sources covering that cost, to erect those signs.

WHEREAS, Ruben Salazar was born in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, across the Rio Grande from El Paso on March 3, 1928. Eleven months later his parents, Luz Chavez and Salvador Salazar, a watch repairman, moved across the river to El Paso, Texas, where Ruben was raised. After high school he entered the United States Army, where he served a two-year tour of duty just before the Korean conflict. Out of the service and now an American citizen, Salazar entered the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) and received his bachelor of arts in journalism in 1954. During his last two years as a student at UTEP he worked as a reporter for the El Paso Herald Post, where he demonstrated both great interest and skill in investigative reporting; and

WHEREAS, While working as a reporter at the El Paso Herald Post, he became deeply aware of police mistreatment of Mexicans and wrote extensively on the brutality against Mexican-Americans in Texas prisons. After graduation, Salazar took a job with the Press Democrat in Santa Rosa, California. Three years later, he left the staff of the Press Democrat for a reportorial position with the San Francisco News. Having served his seven years of apprenticeship, in 1959 he moved south as a reporter on the city staff of the Los Angeles Times; and

WHEREAS, During his six years at the Los Angeles Times in the city room, he persuaded his superiors to allow him to write a column, sometimes troublesome for the Times, in which he gave voice to the problems and concerns of eastside Chicanos. He continued to give evidence of his ability as a reporter, writing a series of articles on the Los Angeles Latino community in 1963, for which he received an award from the California State Fair, the Los Angeles Press Club, and the Equal Opportunity Foundation. In addition to his awards, the series also earned him a well-deserved reputation for conscientious and objective reporting.

In 1965, Salazar was sent to cover the civil war in the Dominican Republic, where he described the views of the rebels and the reaction to the U.S. involvement. Later that year, Salazar was sent by the Times to Vietnam as a foreign correspondent to cover the rapidly escalating American involvement there, of special interest to the Latino community because of the proportionately large number of Mexican-Americans in the U.S. forces and among the casualties. He was one of two Times correspondents in Vietnam during the period of increased U.S. involvement; and

WHEREAS, In late 1966, Ruben Salazar left Vietnam and was called back by the Times and placed as the bureau chief in Mexico City, thus becoming the first Mexican-American to hold such a position at a major newspaper. He covered stories throughout Latin America including the first conference of the Latin American Solidarity Organization in Cuba in 1967. In 1968, he covered a student demonstration in Mexico City when Mexican soldiers opened fire; and

WHEREAS, In late 1968, Salazar returned to Los Angeles with a special assignment to cover the Mexican-American community, in which the Chicano movement was beginning to move into high gear. Aware of the increasing importance and rising militancy of Mexican-Americans, in the following year the Times took steps, involving Salazar, to focus more sharply on the Chicano community. In early 1970, he began writing a weekly column featured on the Friday Opinion page explaining and interpreting Chicano life and culture to the greater Los Angeles community; and

WHEREAS, In January of 1970, Salazar decided to accept a position as news director of station KMEX-TV and planned to leave the Times. The response of the Times was to suggest that in his new position Salazar continue writing his weekly column. He decided he could handle both jobs and subsequently used both forums to articulate the many grievances that Mexican-Americans had nursed for so long. A political moderate, he nevertheless spoke out fearlessly, condemning racism, prejudice, and segregation. Abuses by the police became the special target of his hard-hitting weekly essays, and he repeatedly pointed out in his column the much higher than average Mexican-American casualty rate in the Vietnam War. As a result of his articles, he was under investigation by the Los Angeles Police Department and the FBI, and pressure was put on him to tone down his language; and

WHEREAS, When the National Chicano Moratorium, a committee of Chicanos who opposed the Vietnam War, called a march for August 29, 1970, in Los Angeles, Ruben Salazar naturally was present at the event in his dual capacity. Approximately 20,000 members from all over the United States had gathered to decry the Vietnam War since Chicanos had the highest number of casualties in proportion to their population. With his crew from KMEX he covered the march from Belvedere Park to Laguna Park. As trouble began at a nearby liquor store, it quickly led to a confrontation between the police and marchers, which led to rioting and

looting covering 28 blocks. The violence led to 200 arrests, 60 injured, and three deaths. As the day grew late into the afternoon, the riot moved east on Whittier Boulevard toward the Silver Dollar Café. Attempting to avoid the riot-ridden streets, Ruben Salazar and his news crew stopped to have a drink in the Silver Dollar Café. Shortly after they entered the Silver Dollar Café, a deputy fired a high-velocity 10-inch tear gas projectile meant for piercing walls, into the café and hit Salazar in the head. Ruben Salazar was killed instantly, suffering a projectile wound of the temple area causing massive injury to the brain. The subsequent 16-day coroner's inquest ruled Salazar's death a homicide, but there was never any legal action; and

WHEREAS, Salazar's tragic death was a consequence of the contentious and often racially heated period of time. His informed, articulate, and level-headed voice for social change inspired many in the Latino community, and his legacy has encouraged Latinos to enter the field of journalism. In 1971, he was posthumously awarded a special Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award for his columns, which communicated the culture and alienation of Chicanos effectively and compassionately. He received the highest *Raza* accolade, a *corrido* describing his contributions to *La Raza*. Ruben Salazar's life and death has been recognized and honored with awards, scholarships, public schools, and community centers in his name. Most notably, after the controversy of his death had subsided, Laguna Park was renamed Salazar Park in his honor. In July of 1976, Salazar was honored by the California State University of Los Angeles in the renaming of South Hall to Ruben Salazar Memorial Hall. On the 10th anniversary of his death, his widow, Sally Salazar, was the guest of honor at the dedication of the Ruben Salazar Library in Santa Rosa, California; now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring*, That the Legislature hereby officially designates that the portion of State Highway Route 710 between East Cesar E. Chavez Avenue and State Highway Route 60 located in the County of Los Angeles as the "Ruben Salazar Memorial Highway"; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the Department of Transportation is requested to determine the cost of appropriate signs, consistent with the signing requirements for the state highway system, showing this special designation, and upon receiving donations from nonstate sources sufficient to cover that cost, to erect those signs; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the Department of Transportation and to the author for appropriate distribution.